

Dwight's Journal of Music.

WHOLE No. 904.

BOSTON, SATURDAY, DEC. 11, 1875.

VOL. XXXV. No. 18.

The Piano-Forte.

A BRIEF INQUIRY INTO THE ORIGIN OF THE INSTRUMENT.

Copious as is human speech in locutions of an expostulatory kind, it is sometimes very difficult to fix upon a form of remonstrance which shall be at once mild and firm, courteous yet impressive. The French *Comment donc!* is less an expression of reprehension than of interrogative surprise; while, although there is an immensity of significance in the Spanish *Hombre!* that interjective noun is of individual and not of general applicability; and, moreover, you cannot say *Hombre!* to a lady. The classic *Proh pudor!* has been worn intolerably threadbare; the Transatlantic *Hold on!* is slang; and the Scottish *Eh, mon!* is archaic. But perhaps we shall find the expression we seek in our own modern English, and in the blandly remonstrant and vaguely dissuasive phrase, *Now, really!* It may mean a great deal, or it may mean scarcely anything at all; but it has found general acceptance in polite English society of recent date as a substitute for the powerful but unseemly expletives in which even our kings and princes were accustomed to signify their dissent from a given proposition. Anxious not to transgress the etiquette of international courtesy, we thus conceive that there could scarcely be a more appropriate remark, with which to confront the curiously inopportune scheme which has just been set on foot in the city of Florence, than *Now, really!* It is gravely announced that preparations are being made to celebrate next year in the Tuscan capital the centenary of Cristofori, who, on "evidence inadequate to prove a debt, impotent to convict of the lowest offence," has been proclaimed to be the inventor of the piano-forte. We propose to strip this virtually mythical inventor of the laurels unjustly placed upon his brow; but it is not our purpose arbitrarily to set up in his stead any fresh claimant to the honor of having devised an instrument of music which for the last hundred years has been a source of enjoyment to some and of acute mental and physical agony to others. The piano-forte, in fact, was never invented, in the proper sense of the term, at all; since, at its best, it is only an adaptation, yet susceptible of perfectibility, of a long series of stringed instruments—one of the earliest of which may have been played upon by St. Cecilia, whose ancestresses may have been taught by Timotheus, who may have learnt the original art from Apollo.

A hundred years may be regarded as the fairly approximative period during which the civilized world has been either blessed or afflicted with an improved harmonic machine in which the sounds are produced by imparting vibration to elastic strings lightly stretched over a case or box, and covered with thin boards, the resonance of which, imparted to the volume of air which they enclose, enhances the development of the sound. The old composers, in writing their concerted or orchestral pieces, could only avail themselves, as mechanical means of expression, of such instruments as virginals, spinets, clavichords, and harpsichords; but so soon as some ingenious craftsman had improved the antique instrument into the modern piano, the *maestri*, recognizing the peculiar capabilities of the amended machine, repaid their obligations to the mechanician by writing for the piano unprecedentedly fine pieces of music, and by practising the execution of those productions to such an extent as to give as once the highest celebrity to the novel apparatus. It is remarkable that while poetry,

architecture, sculpture, and, in its noblest forms, painting attained their highest perfection in ages of remote antiquity, it has been reserved for the moderns to achieve unsurpassed excellence in music, which is itself probably the most ancient of arts, since there are few savages who cannot sing. This apparent anomaly, however, disappears when we remember that, in all cases save that of the fiddle, the progress of instrumental music depends mainly on the mechanical perfection of the instrument which gives it voice and meaning. Thus it follows that music, as a fine art, should be at present in a more advanced state than at any other period, for the reason that never before have our mechanical resources been so great or so fully developed. There may have been plenty of Mendelssohns and Schuberts as composers in olden days; but there could have been but few such executants as Thalberg or Liszt, because there were no sufficiently perfected instruments adapted to the full display of their capacity. Even as regards the composers it is not impossible that much of that which we call the sublime-simplicity and the artless-pathos of a Lulli or a Harry Lawes, a Purcell or a Locke, was due to the fact that, apart from the organ, they were destitute of technical resources for carrying out their ideas: nor, we trust, is it irreverent to assume that the illustrious Mozart himself, who only lived to see the earliest experiments in the modern piano-forte, would have written still more magnificently than he did if he had had the use of a Broadwood or an Erard's Grand in lieu of a clavichord or a spinet. The leading idea of the modern piano is that of making the jack, or hammer, strike the string instead of pulling it; but the conception of this notion has been claimed by the French, the Italians, and the Germans, and the real originator is hopelessly lost in an innumerable cloud of claimants. Some kind of hammer-harpsichord is mentioned in the *Giornale d'Italia* so early as the year 1711. It appears to have been an enclosed adaptation of the mediæval original, and one was brought to England in the reign of George II.; but so slow and imperfect was its mechanism that nothing much livelier than the Dead March in *Saul* could be played upon it. The great defect of the primitive hammer was that it did not instantaneously quit the string after it had struck the blow, so that the sound was deadened; but this deficiency is said to have been remedied in 1768 by one Christoph Gottlieb Schroeter, of Hohenstein in Bohemia. Is this the Cristofori whom the Florentines propose to honor? Schroeter published an explanatory pamphlet in which he certainly said that a performer on this instrument could play *piano* or *forte* at pleasure; but it is on record that more than twenty years previously, when John Sebastian Bach visited Frederick the Great at Berlin, the King was so pleased with certain forte-pianos manufactured by one Silbermann, of Freiburg, that he purchased no fewer than fifteen of these instruments, and caused them to be placed in different apartments of his palace for the delectation of himself and the great musician. But kings are an inconstant race, and eighteen years afterwards Frederick, grown weary of his forte-pianos, ordered from England the very finest harpsichord that could be produced by the first maker of the day, Tschudi, of London, the predecessor of the actual firm of Broadwood.

Into the further bibliography of the popular instrument it is scarcely necessary to enter; since enough has been said, perhaps, to show that we were justified in putting before the Florentine committee plain reasons why the

celebration of the centenary of an inventor who has not yet been discovered would be almost ludicrous in its inappropriateness. As it is, there happen actually to be two Christophers in the field: one the Christoph Gottlieb Schroeter, as aforesaid; and the other, Bartolomeo Cristofoli or Cristofori, who was almost contemporary with the Bohemian, and who produced an instrument which he called "grave cembalo col piano e forte;" but in neither case would Florence have any peculiar right to hold a piano centenary. If Schroeter was the originator, the festival should be held at Hohenstein; if Cristofoli was the man, it is in Padua, of which learned city he was a native, that his memory should be honored. Again, the Czech and the Italian might find their claims disputed by the Frenchman Marius, who, in 1716, manufactured an instrument in which the jacks were little hammers tipped with leather, instead of the wooden tongues which had formerly impelled the crow-quills of the old spinets. Marius called his piano a *clavecin à maillets*; but he is shrewdly suspected of having plagiarized his idea from a magnificently elaborate made *clavecin* by Johann Ruchers, of Antwerp, so early as 1630. For the rest, conceding the point that the thoroughly modern piano is about a hundred years old, there could be no harm in the *fanatici per la musica* holding a piano-forte centenary in any city in the civilized world where pianos jangle; but why the festival should take place in Florence, or indeed in Italy at all—a country which has produced very few renowned executants on the piano-forte, and is incapable moreover of manufacturing first-rate pianos—passes comprehension. We are told, nevertheless, that Cristofori's dubious invention is to be commemorated by a series of international concerts, at which the Abbe Liszt has consented to play; but if there be any of the old Adam left in that reverend pianist he would be justified, we should say, in flinging his music stool at the heads of the Florentine committee as a practical plea in favor of the claims of his quasi-compatriot Schroeter. For the rest, a congress of pianos and piano-forte players in any great European capital would be a much more sensible undertaking than a centenary in memory of a doubtless respectable mechanic about whom nothing that is tangible can be remembered. There would be no harm in passing in review the old instruments of the early Broadwoods, the Backers, the Zumpfs, the Kirkmans, the Pohlmanns, the Becks, the Stodarts, the Tompkinsons, and the Clementis, should any of those antiquated pianos yet survive, and contrasting them with the grands, semi-grands, the horizontals, the uprights, the cabinets, the cottages of the best modern makers, not forgetting the famous iron pianos of the American Chickering. But, if such an assemblage is to be held in Italy, Milan would be a much better place to hold it in than Florence, since, outside the capital of Lombardy, there is a very vast plain called the Piazza d'Armi, in which the piano-maniacs could celebrate their mysteries, thus enabling that portion of the community who do not appreciate the piano-forte to give the instrumentalists a wide berth. Concurrently a smaller congress, composed either of cynics or of sages, might hold a quiet sederunt in the interior of the city for the purpose of resolving, if resolution be possible, several curious questions: First, how it comes about that piano-forte-playing is the only art the almost incessant study and practice of which fails to confer on the student, save in rare instances, anything beyond a mediocre degree of proficiency; secondly, why, although female executants on this

instrument are, as against men, as ten to one, really distinguished lady pianistes are against professors of the Thalberg-Kalkbrenner calibre—for fear of being invidious we speak only of the dead—as one to a hundred; thirdly, why ladies who in their maiden years have been brilliant performers usually abandon the pursuit of instrumental music so soon as they get married; and, finally, why it is that, whilst the number of men of the brightest genius who have been professional or amateur fiddlers or violinists is amazing, the vast majority of the great piano-forte-players of the past, excluding the great composers, to whom all musical instruments should be familiar, have not been able to do anything more than play on the piano-forte?

GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA.

Cherubini's "Water-Carrier" at the Princess's Theatre, London.

[From the Telegraph, Oct. 29.]

Mr. Carl Rosa is the Abdiel of his order—"among the faithless faithful only he." In his eyes a manager's prospectus is not an elaborate joke, but a document containing pledges which have to be redeemed. He looks upon it *au sérieux*, and is ready to make sacrifices in vindication of its honor, as on Wednesday night, when he produced Cherubini's "Les Deux Journées." Every opera announced in the prospectus of the too brief season, this excepted, had been brought out, and only four more performances could be given, all of which it was easy to devote to well-known and assuredly profitable works. But Mr. Rosa had promised "Les Deux Journées," and that was enough. He kept his word.

The choice of "Les Deux Journées," or "The Water Carrier," as in the English version it is called, was a bold one, and the performance of the opera could only be regarded as experimental. In all countries this work is talked of as a masterpiece, but in none has it ever become thoroughly popular. At the Opéra Comique de Paris—successor to the Théâtre Feydeau, where "Les Deux Journées" was first heard—it is known only in the library; while even Germany, though more acquainted with it as "Der Wasser-Träger," refuses "letters of naturalization" in its favor. The history of "The Water Carrier" amongst ourselves is even more disheartening. A few years ago, Mr. Mapleson, in an access of classical revivalism, brought out Cherubini's opera, but was so disheartened by the aspect of a house filled only with connoisseurs who never pay that he withdrew it after one performance. Till Wednesday night this made up the entire career of the work in England, and it must be admitted that, viewing the whole situation, some boldness was necessary for another attempt. Conviction of this fact is not lessened by the knowledge that there are obvious and intelligible reasons why "The Water Carrier" has not charmed the multitude. The story, albeit pure in sentiment, and appealing to lofty and generous instincts, is too much involved for an opera, while fatally disregarding of the rule that insists upon one prominent character, through which a "star" may shine. The music, moreover, sternly avoids *ad captandum* effects, and subordinates itself to the course of the drama with a completeness that should relax the grim visage of the savagest warrior under the banner of Wagner. An opera so constructed, and dealing in simple, heroic fashion with the devotedness of a common laborer, has little to recommend it when judged by ordinary standards. The question for Mr. Carl Rosa was, therefore, whether a public could be found who would regard the work in a different and higher light—a public able to appreciate pure and noble motives, even when conveyed through an imperfect medium, and qualified, also, to discern the excellence of music which, with unfaltering wing, keeps in the highest region of art. Mr. Rosa answered this question affirmatively, and, judging by the aspect of his theatre and the behavior of his audience on Wednesday night, he was not far wrong. The opera won a cumulative success. Well received throughout the first act, the second evoked warmth, while the third excited enthusiasm. Something of this must no doubt be attributed to a performance of real merit, but Cherubini spoke to willing and sympathetic ears. Applause was hushed during his ritornellos, that not even a bar of the music might be lost. This is an encouraging state of things, and may well make those who desire the progress of dramatic music

more anxious than ever to see Mr. Carl Rosa at the head of a permanent and flourishing enterprise.

"The Water Carrier" was so fully discussed in connection with its performance at Drury-lane that we should not now be justified in treating it as an unknown work. But stress may again be laid upon the purity and pathos of Bouilly's libretto—in this respect a true sister of that which came from the same pen and fell into the hands of Beethoven. It is not, after all, necessary to search for the subject of an opera among garbage, in the gutters, or between the covers of the "Newgate Calendar." We are sometimes led to argue the contrary from the prevalence of filth and crime on the lyric stage; wherefore, if "The Water Carrier" did nothing else but demonstrate that a purer atmosphere is possible, it would serve an excellent purpose. But Cherubini's opera does more. It shows how music, as severe in its dignity and chaste in its tone as some Greek temple, is compatible with the humblest surroundings. What can be more homely than the dwelling of the poor water carrier, or more unheroic than the family joys and anxieties which there pass before us? Yet into this rude abode and this lowly life music enters, not to abash and humiliate by contrast, but to elevate and ennoble. According to some theorists having a reverence for what they regard as the fitness of things, the refined and exalted music given by Cherubini to his humble characters is out of place. Not so. Though a novelist dare not make a peasant talk like a scholar, a composer can make him sing in lofty strains, for the simple reason that the best music is the fittest exponent of human emotion. But the influence of works like the "Water Carrier" is good altogether. In ethics and in art they are on the side of true progress.

We must speak of the performance on Wednesday night in the highest terms. Mr. Carl Rosa, conscious that nothing was too good for such an opera, distributed the characters among the best of his company, and bestowed upon rehearsals all needful care. The result was a standard of excellence seldom obtained even where greater pretensions are made, band and chorus being alike admirable, while not a single part failed of adequate representation. To choose, for example, among the Constance of Mdlle. Torriani, the Marcellina of Miss Hersee, and the Angelina of Miss Gaylord, would be a task as embarrassing as Paris found that of bestowing the apple. Each lady was equal to her work, and it seemed as though none other could have done it better. Mr. Lyall presented a capital Antonio, his acting especially commanding praise for its naturalness and intelligence. Mr. Aynsley Cook (Daniel), Mr. Celli (Captain), Mr. Ludwig (Lieutenant), and Mr. Arthur Howell (Semos) exerted themselves with great success in perfecting the *ensemble*; and if, on the other hand, Mr. Nordblom was not an ideal Armand, ample amends were made by the perfection of Mr. Santley's Mikeli. After the success of this fine artist in the "Porter of Havre," nothing else could have been anticipated for his embodiment of the poor Savoyard. Expectation was more than met. Mr. Santley's acting throughout was natural, and therefore powerful in the highest degree. Never betraying a trace of exaggeration, it was always equal to the demands of the character assumed, which stood forth clear of outline and consistent in all its details—a work, in fact, of genuine art. Of Mr. Santley as a vocalist we need hardly speak. Enough that, from first to last, he touched nothing in the opera he did not adorn. The recalls after each act, especially the last, were enthusiastic, and the greatest credit is due to Mr. Rosa for a revival which will make his short campaign one to be remembered.

The series of performances closes to-morrow night with "L'Nozze di Figaro," and on Monday. Mr. Rosa begins a provincial tour, throughout which he may reckon on the best wishes of all music-lovers.

Alexandra Palace.—Handel's Esther.

[From the London "Daily Telegraph."]

With the successful example of the Crystal Palace before them, the managers of the Muswell Hill enterprise could hardly do other than establish concerts akin to those which, under Mr. Manns' direction, have attained almost world-wide fame. The Alexandra Palace, therefore, has its musical Saturdays, and hopes to gather together, in the far north of London, an audience as numerous and, in time, as cultured as that which assembles weekly in the far south.

At the Alexandra Palace, on Saturday last, the

deed performed was the revival of Handel's *Esther*. It was officially announced that this work would be produced on the occasion for the first time since 1757, the date of its last hearing, during the life of the illustrious composer. This may not be strictly correct, because we have always had amongst us societies whose laudable curiosity induced them to explore fields of art across which the beaten path did not run. These institutions, we can hardly doubt, have not forgotten a work which, though neglected, stands out conspicuous in the record of Handel's life. The overture has ever occupied the place of a favorite, and the great provincial festivals used years ago to dip now and then into the body of the oratorio. But there is reason to believe that no public performance on an adequate scale intervened between the day when *Esther* was given, in 1757, and Saturday last. The interval is a wide one, measured by the life of man; but art is long, and can see with complacency the flux of time. It can afford to wait; and to all in that happy position everything comes, even justice, which, proverbially, has leaden feet. The story of *Esther* scarcely needs telling here, because it is familiar to everybody with a smattering of knowledge about England's best-loved musician. Enough if we call to the amateur's memory how the oratorio was written for the Duke of Chandos, in 1720, when Handel filled the post of chapelmaster in the household of that gorgeous peer; how, after being twice performed at Cannons, it was laid aside for twelve years, and only revived at a private performance, got up by Mr. Bernard Gates, master of the Chapel Royal boys; how the interest it then excited led to a public hearing; and how Handel was thus induced to give his attention to oratorio as a means of wealth and fame. The story, in outline, is soon told; but it would not be easy to exhaust the significance of *Esther*, as the first English oratorio, or of those seemingly trivial events which, working through it, launched the composer on a career that secured for his memory a

"Broad approach of fame,

And ever-ringing avenues of song."

So regarded, the oratorio appeals to us as does the tiny source of some vast river, or the thought in a single human brain which, according to Emerson, is the parent of every revolution. The manuscript of *Esther*, as it lay dust-covered on the shelf at Cannons, contained not only all the actualities of oratorio as we are now conscious of them, but all the possibilities which, in the future, may become real. To what the neglected score has led we know; it was like the last offshoot of a decayed stock—for oratorio in Italy was then fast dying out—taken to root and flourish in another and more vigorous soil. Upon its existence, as far as can now be seen, depended the future of a grand form of art. What would have been the result had a servant at Cannons lit the Duke's library fire with the precious paper before Mr. Bernard Gates obtained a duplicate? May we fancy that that which is now known as oratorio would have no existence? Hardly, perhaps, dare we go so far, but it is certain that nobody could then have shown Handel the possibilities of oratorio in England, and it is probable that he would have written his dearly-loved op-*er*as to the end of the chapter. Imagine English sacred music without *The Messiah*, *Israel*, and *Judas*,—nay, imagine England itself without *The Messiah* alone! To do so is to see in the mind's eye a somewhat different country, or there is nothing in the exercise of an abiding, all-pervading, and powerful influence.

The music of *Esther* is a theme so ample and tempting that we scarcely dare venture upon its discussion within the compass of a notice like this. To exhaust the topic, we should have not only to consider the work *per se*, but from a comparative standpoint, marking how and in what measure it shows the influence of Italian art upon the solid basis of German thought, and how and in what degrees it contrasts or harmonizes with the master's matured style. Upon these points much might be said which now can only be indicated. A first thought connected with the work has reference to its non-dramatic character. The form of the Italian sacred play is preserved by a division into acts and scenes, but the libretto is so constructed as to prove clearly enough that the idea of a dramatic performance was not in the writer's mind. Moreover, the original *Esther* was even less adapted for stage business than the second and enlarged form of the work produced, without theatrical accessories, in 1732. In this there is no reason to imagine that Handel was actuated by deference to English notions. Italy herself at that time had abandoned the sacred drama, and her oratorios were performed, when produced at all, with nothing save music and poetry to recommend them.

But the influence of Italian art upon *Esther* takes a wider range than the form of telling the story. We see it especially in the character of the solos, which are unusually numerous, after the fashion of the model Handel adopted. The grace and suavity, tunefulness, and balance of phrase, that characterize, *inter alia*, "Dread not, righteous Queen," "Tears assist me," and "O beauteous Queen, unclothe those eyes," mark their origin with a distinctness doubly apparent when a contrast is made with the more rugged eloquence of contemporary German art as illustrated by Bach. But, while this is the case, it is also true that we see Handel alone in the dramatic fitness which welds each air firmly into the perfect whole of the work. There is not a song in *Esther*, so regarded, that fails to present a study of characterization and truthful expression. The choruses are fewer and less developed, with two exceptions, than those of later works, but all of them bear the stamp of the master's genius. What a mingling of grandeur and pathos have we in "Ye sons of Israel, mourn!" and how interesting it is to recognize this early demonstration of the fact that the Saxon master, while able to lead a nation's praises, could also embody, in accents fit to "storm the seat of mercy," a nation's cry of lamentation. What a wealth of power, moreover, is there in the triumphant song of the Israelites, "He comes to end our woes," and how the hammer of this musical Thor descends on the words "Earth, tremble," till it seems as though the behest were literally obeyed. But in the final chorus, "The Lord our enemy hath slain"—an extended *scena* introducing *solis* again and again—Handel may almost be held to surpass himself. It is a magnificent effort at fullest stretch of power, Pelion rising upon Ossa till the heavens are touched, and there seems no possibility of ascending higher. If only for this chorus, the revival of *Esther* deserves a welcome. But the oratorio is full of beauty, and now, with its sounds still vibrating, we look back over the gulf of a hundred and eighteen years with pity for the generations that neglected it.

Passing the questions involved in the conflicting editions of the work, and merely saying that the version used on Saturday was that of the English "Handel Society," edited by the late Charles Lucas, we come to the performance, which drew to Muswell Hill an audience, not only large, but representative of all classes in the musical world. Here let us promptly recognize the merit generally displayed, from Mr. Weist Hill, who worked with heart and soul as well as skill, down to the humblest chorister. Great pains must have been taken, and many rehearsals held, before music so unfamiliar could have been so thoroughly grasped. But the end was worth the means, thanks to which *Esther* made a fitting *début*. The soloists were Madame Nouver, Miss Enriquez, Mr. Vernon Rigby, Mr. Howells, and Mr. Wadmore—all English artists (as was fitting), although the first-named lady chooses to assume the disguise of a foreigner. Madame Nouver, who is new to London concert-rooms, has a fine and powerful soprano voice, as well as considerable aptitude for her profession. She needs further teaching, however, especially in recitative, the proper signification and manner of which do not seem to have been explained to her. Miss Enriquez sang capably "O Jordan, sacred tide," and a very dramatic invocation which opens the third act; while Mr. Howells, a student, we believe, at the Royal Academy of Music, pleased by his agreeable voice and unobtrusive rendering of the second tenor music. Mr. Vernon Rigby, strictly accurate as usual, sang the airs of Ahasuerus and Mordecai excellently, making with them the greater effect because they are well suited to his voice and style. Praise must also be given to this gentleman for his recitatives, which were uniformly declaimed with intelligence and dramatic purpose. Mr. Wadmore rendered the music of Haman in a manner which showed the possession of more than a good voice, and the encore given to his recitative, "Turn not, O Queen," was as deserved as it was unexpected. The band and chorus, as already intimated, were thoroughly equal to their work, and Mr. Weist Hill won hearty commendation by the judicious manner of his conducting. That *Esther* had a warm reception may be readily supposed. Four numbers were repeated, and at the end long and loud applause testified general satisfaction. We have only to say further, that the additions to Handel's meagre score were made by Mr. Halberstadt in the true spirit of an artist, and with touches here and there of striking beauty. Not a note of the original was altered, while the additions made—a liberal allowance of trombone excepted—were marked by most excellent judgment.

Musical Criticism.

[From a Report of the first meeting of the Musical Association, in London, Oct. 31, 1875.]

(Concluded from Page 133.)

If, in the more important matters of religion and politics, we find such a diversity of irreconcilable opinions, we cannot be surprised that in matters of taste the most opposite views of the musical art should prevail among critics. It may be asked, and not for the first time, "who shall decide when doctors disagree?" Let a doctor reply. "The opinions of acknowledged critics," writes Dr. Crotch, "accumulate in time, and are compacted into a mass, that irresistibly bears down before it all the opposition of false taste and ignorance." Until that golden age of criticism shall arrive, we must fold our hands, and look on with patience and resignation.

It will be conceded, I think, by none more than the critics themselves, that, as actually practised, musical criticism is more a counterfeit than a reality. I have heard it stated by an accomplished musical critic, that "there is no such thing as musical criticism." In a certain sense there is doubtless some ground for the statement. Musical criticism is, however, not a myth; it is an acknowledged fact. This leads me to inquire, what is its practical use? Its chief aim should be to educate public taste in musical matters; "to create a current of true and fresh ideas." Another practical use is to draw public attention to the productions and performances of meritorious music which might otherwise be born to blush unseen, And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Regarding thus its practical use, I hold criticism to be the light and life of art and literature. Milton's sublime epic was comparatively unknown, and all but dead to the general public, until Addison's brilliant criticisms brought it once more into notice, and, as it were, quickened it into life. Many of the inimitable beauties of Shakespeare, but for his innumerable critics, might have remained longer unrecognized. Few persons have the experience, the confidence, the courage, the ability to form unaided, independent opinions, and to express them. The general public, as a rule, had they even the power to judge, would not give themselves the trouble to think on matters relating to art. They are led by "the press;" they pin their faith upon what "the papers say." A very distinguished public man once said to me, in jest, "The fact is I have no opinions until I have read my *Times*." Great is the responsibility of those who mislead public opinion!

It may be alleged that no great musical works are now produced worthy to engage the pen of an accomplished critic. Works of a high class now and then appear in this country and abroad, which, if they do not bear the hall-mark of genius, and the stamp of entire originality, are, nevertheless, compositions of considerable merit.

These works receive, I presume, the attentive and conscientious consideration of musical critics. No pecuniary encouragement awaits the composer of music of a very superior character. We are living in a utilitarian, not an artistic or poetic, age. This is the golden age of royalties and advertisements! A musical composition to be recognized by a music publisher as a work of high merit must possess the inestimable quality of *immediate sale*. This, from a publisher's point of view, is, no doubt, financially correct; his mission is to sell music, not to advance art. But what about the present and future of music? What about the music producer? Be it remembered that music was not bestowed upon us for mere amusement; not for petty objects; least of all for the sole benefit of music publishers and theatrical managers! It was a divine gift, for high moral purposes; for the delight, the solace, the civilization of mankind. Every encouragement should be given to the development of these high objects. To point out this to the unreflecting, to dwell upon the fact, to keep it in view, to urge its unanimous recognition, might well be included among the manifold duties and obligations of the musical critic. From the dignity of a profession music appears to be fast descending to a trade. Is it not a duty incumbent upon the musical critic to arrest, as he undoubtedly might, this downward course? Notwithstanding the increased cultivation of music, the study of which, generally speaking, is more superficial than solid, the multiplicity of musical academies and colleges, training schools for music, choral classes, and the endless opportunities to hear fine musical performances on easy terms, and every kind of music, from the sentimental ballad of the Christy Minstrel

to the almost perfect orchestra of the Crystal Palace, there is no appreciable improvement in the public taste for "high art" in music. I am aware that the designation "public" is one of wide significance; that it embraces, if I may be allowed the expression, many publics. I speak of the public as a whole. Undeniable testimony in confirmation of my assertion might be furnished by the ledgers of music publishers.

The earnest, accomplished musical critic should not confine his literary labors to the criticism of the music of the present time only, not even to that of a comparatively recent date. In these days of literary and musical research, enquiry, and investigation, it would be desirable, as both interesting and instructive, to stimulate curiosity to have a nearer acquaintance with the fine compositions of the great Italian Masters of the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. How few musicians know more than the names of Palestrina, Carissimi, Cesti, Leonardo Leo, Alessandro Scarlatti, Jomelli, Clari, Galuppi, and other learned composers of Italy, too numerous for mention. Rich mines of ancient Italian music remain almost unexplored. Musical critics of ability should enter the musical catacombs of Italy, and disinter their buried treasures, and comment upon them, and show modern composers of all countries how they may refresh their musical faculties by an occasional draught from those pure sources. Then of our own great musicians and their works—the illustrious church composers of the 14th, 17th, and 18th centuries—how little is known! Here, also, is a vast field for exploration—a glorious opening for musical research and criticism. I shall be reminded that many of their immortal productions have already been criticized by musicians of a by-gone period. I shall not stop to question the estimate which Burney and the critics of his day put upon the music and musicians with which and with whom they were acquainted. They judged by the light of their experience, which, compared with that which has been since acquired, was very limited. The compositions of the ancient Masters of Italy and England will again bear critical examination by the light of modern musical science. Let the critic of music emulate the critic of literature. See how he turns and returns to the writers of antiquity for themes for his critical pen! Will Homer and Horace ever cease to furnish employment to literary critics? Will Shakspeare? Will Dante? Will Schiller and Goethe? In like manner might musical critics be engaged. Then would the area of musical literature be enlarged; then would musical knowledge be diffused; then would the musical critic's vocation be honored.

A few comments upon the criticism of musical performance will suffice. In this department of musical criticism we might well expect to find a more than ordinary diversity of opinion. Technical knowledge and long experience are necessary to those who would attempt to guide public opinion in its estimate of executive merit. I have often marvelled at hearing what I have considered very inferior musical performances enthusiastically applauded and warmly commended by musical critics. Indiscriminate applause and undeserved commendation tend to bring the critic's office into disrepute, and to render all applause and all commendation worthless. If musical criticism is to be of any practical utility, the critic must perform his task—albeit an unpleasant one—fearlessly. A delicate duty should be delicately performed; the critic owes it to the public. I shall, perhaps, be told that we are not living in Utopia, and that as the world is constituted a state of ideal perfection in musical criticism is not to be attained more than in the ordinary affairs of life.

In the "Monthly Musical Magazine," commenced in 1818, and ended in 1828, are to be found some very excellent specimens of musical criticism. The "Harmonicon," a once popular musical journal, whose existence terminated about forty years ago, contains, also, many critical articles of great interest and worth. The late George Hozarth and Henry Chorley were amongst the best modern musical critics. The former—an accomplished musical historian, as well as an acute critic—added to the stock of criticism by his well expressed opinions, based upon sound musical knowledge and experience. The latter writer, eccentric in his views, and in his mode of expressing them, was more generally correct than incorrect in his estimate of musical talent. Berlioz in France, and the elder Fétis in Belgium, have left rich legacies in criticism, although the accuracy of some of their musical judgments may be open to question. Schumann, and other German writers on music have done service to art. As musical critics I believe it will be discovered hereafter that Liszt

and Wagner have worked with a contrary effect. The admirable criticisms of the gifted Schumann demonstrate an appreciation of the late Sterndale Bennett's compositions no less creditable to the German critic than to the English musician he so generously and so ably judged.

This leads me to refer to the unpardonable ignorance displayed by the Germans on the subject of English music and musicians. They ignore the immortal compositions of our great church composers; of our madrigal and glee writers; and they seek no acquaintance with the music which British composers have produced during the past half century. This is certainly discreditable to the German musician, who assumes to have a comprehensive knowledge of music and its history. The musicians of Germany are now occupied only with themselves. By their writings and their performances they are striving to force into undue prominence the compositions of the modern German, or the so-called "higher development" school of music. German musicians of advanced opinions already regard as effete the glorious works of their most renowned masters. There are some musical advanced Liberals who would even presume, forsooth, to lay their sacrilegious hands upon Beethoven's scores, with a view to their improvement.

Doubtless, the well-known epitaph upon Shakespeare's tomb, in the church at Stratford-upon-Avon, is yet in the memory of my auditors. It is this:—

Blest be the man who spares these stones,
And curs'd be he who moves my bones!

Might not the spirit of Shakespeare's epitaph, if not its words, be aptly applied, in these meddlesome times, to Beethoven's scores? Forty-five years ago Mendelssohn wrote:—"Certainly, Germany is a strange land; producing great people, but not appreciating them." "When a German like Beethoven writes an opera, then comes a German like Stantz or Poissi and strikes out a ritornelle; another German adds a trombone part to his symphonies; a third declares that Beethoven is overloaded; and thus is a great man sacrificed." We may, I think, congratulate ourselves that there is yet in existence a strong musical conservative opposition.

The taste for musical ugliness appears to be gaining ground rapidly amongst a certain section of modern German musicians. I judge so by the enthusiastic admiration I hear expressed for music whose discordant effects—defects would be a more apt expression—are simply hideous. No amount of novelty, no new harmonic combinations, no ingenious instrumental contrivances, no increase of orchestral noise, can compensate for the absence of musical ideas, pure melody, musical elegance and grace, and masterly symmetrical construction. Nothing is impossible. Musicians in general may, in the course of time, learn to discover beauty as well as sublimity in ugliness. Whether in music or in personal appearance, ugliness is, no doubt, an acquired taste, like the taste for tobacco, and similar nauseous appetites.

We have able musical critics who advocate and uphold many of the wild musical doctrines and theories of modern German musicians of advanced opinions. We have others of at least equal ability who persistently oppose and utterly condemn them.

The controversies of art critics should not be discouraged, for benefit to art and to artists may accrue therefrom; in the end, right principles usually prevail.

In bringing the subject of musical criticism to your notice my aim has been to draw forth opinions. "By discussion truth is elicited." I trust that this ancient oriental aphorism may be exemplified by actual experience.

A discussion followed, which eventually became animated. In the course of it Mr. ARTHUR DUKE COLWIDGE said that, having just returned from Leipzig, he was desirous of contesting the idea that the Germans took no interest in English music. They watched the career of our musicians with interest; and he mentioned that there had recently been reprinted in Germany a collection of old English glees and madrigals.—*Mus. Standard.*

Musical Correspondence.

CHICAGO, NOV. 20. What I have to say this time relates chiefly to the work of the eminent lady pianist, Miss JULIA RIVÉ of Cincinnati. A private reception was given her at Mrs. Regina Watson's in this city, Nov. 4, on which occasion she played the following programme:

E-flat Concerto.....Beethoven
(Piano part only.)
Waltz—"Man lebt nur einmal,".....Tausig

Allegro from "Faschingschwank,".....Schumann
Rondo in E flat, op. 16.....Chopin
Faust Waltz (Gounod).....Liszt
Second Rhapsody Hongroise.....Liszt

This programme could hardly be called a fortunate one, since the Beethoven Concerto without orchestral accompaniment, or even the support of a second piano, is almost unintelligible. Besides this, the piano was a full concert grand exceptionally powerful in tone, in consequence of which the refinement of the playing did not so fully appear in the parlor. It was evident (as indeed you have been already informed by your New York correspondent and others) that in Miss Rivé we had to do with a pianist of very high rank. Such a perfect technique certainly is not possessed by any American pianist save Mills. In addition to this Miss Rivé produces the best tone from the piano of any one I have ever heard save Mason (who, as you know, has always been admired for the exquisite delicacy of his touch.) But there were a number of musicians present the evening in question, who like myself doubted whether in this extremely gifted artist we had really a musical soul capable of comprehending and intelligently interpreting the great works of the classic school. Nor was this doubt removed on the evening in question. For as I have said, the concerto, detached from its surroundings and played in a small room, resolved itself very nearly into a bravura piece. The Schumann piece sounded better; though this, too, was not a satisfactory test, for the "Faschingschwank aus Wien" is not a piece in which Schumann's imagination appears at the best advantage. Of all the Schumann works the "Etudes Symphoniques" seems to me the most exacting test of an artist, since it is of great difficulty and contains in itself almost every possible style. Miss Rivé gave the Schumann piece with delightful effect, though not so well as I afterwards heard it done,—of which later. The brilliant pieces were perfection itself. The playing was perfectly delicate, brilliant, powerful, and never strained. I have never heard better.

Last Wednesday evening the Apollo Club gave their first reception of the season, and of the vocal part I will speak farther on. Here Miss Rivé played:

Cadenza from Beethoven's 3d Concerto.....Reinecke
Rondo, op. 16.....Chopin

For encore she played the Second Hungarian Rhapsody of Liszt.

Her second number embraced,

a. Allegretto from 8th Symphony.....Liszt
b. Romeo and Juliet Waltz (Gounod).....Raff

As you will see, the first three pieces were what lawyers call the "operative" part of these selections.

Whether the cadenza, Chopin rondo or the Rhapsody was played best I am sure I cannot say. The first I am unfamiliar with. The Chopin rondo was the very perfection of piano-playing. It was refined and graceful and tender (in the proper places) to the last degree. Equally perfect in its way was the Rhapsody, in which this pianist makes an immense effect. The Chopin rondo and the cadenza of the concerto settled the question in my mind as to Miss Rivé's artistic quality. And so they did in Mr. Upton's, the critic of the *Tribune*. He remarked the next day: "We make bold to claim not simply that Miss Rivé occupies a high rank as an artist, but that in all that goes to constitute an artist she stands the very first of American pianists."

Last Friday evening she played a recital in the Ferry Hall Seminary at Lake Forest with this programme:

1. Sonata Appassionata, op. 57.....Beethoven
2. "Faschingschwank aus Wien," op. 26.....Schumann
Allegro and Scherzerino.
3. Ballade in A flat,
Rondo in E flat, op. 16.....Chopin
Polonaise in A flat.

4. Sonata, op. 42.....Schubert
(Allegro.)
5. Waltz—"Man lebt nur einmal,".....Tausig
6. Rondo Capriccioso.....Mendelssohn
Faust Waltz—Gounod.....Liszt
7. Impromptu in C sharp.....Chopin
Second Rhapsody Hongroise.....Liszt

It would be impertinent in me to presume to remind your readers that this programme makes demands upon a pianist (both mental and physical) such as few artists would like to respond to at one effort. On the present occasion the technical demands were met in a way which left nothing to be desired. This, I am aware, is a very strong way of praising pianoforte-playing, but I can come to no other opinion; for in delicacy, refinement of phrasing, expressiveness of touch, endurance, sweep and power of execution, and breadth of contrast, I have never heard better playing than that of Julia Rivé on this occasion.

But then what of the interpretation? The interpretation of the sonata, I reply, was exceedingly good. The readings were intelligent and artistic, and while it is to the last degree unfair to compare the intellectual efforts of a girl of twenty with the matured processes of men of forty-five or fifty like Rubinstein and Von Bülow (—men who besides their extra twenty years' study of the piano works of Beethoven, have conducted also all his orchestral works and know thoroughly every line of his Chamber music)—the fact remains that her playing is of such excellence as inevitably to invite such comparisons, which in itself is the highest compliment. Suffice it to say therefore that whoever hears Miss Rivé play Beethoven Sonatas will hear them played with the most scrupulous accuracy, with perfect technique, and with intelligence of a high order. Her readings are musical and refined; and for a combination of perfect technique and real musical fire and apparent spontaneity of expression I do not know where to look for her superior. Rubinstein had sometimes more fire. But then Rubinstein frequently departed from his author.—Von Bülow I have not yet had.—Of the rest of the programme what I have already said must suffice; and I conclude this branch of my subject with expressing my great gratification that an American artist has arisen who, owing to a fortunate combination of circumstances and a singularly well-balanced artistic organization, will be likely to extend a knowledge of the best things in piano literature to parts of the country not before reached by them, and in so doing will elevate at once public taste for music, and the ideal of piano-playing.

And now for the Apollo concert. Their programme was this:

Part Song—"The Beleaguered"
Serenade—"Rest, dear'st, rest,".....Kücken
Alto Solo—"In questa Tomba,".....Beethoven
Mrs. Decevee
Madrigal—"The river spirit's Song".....Pearson
Piano solo—(as before given)
Part Song—"The Happiest Land,".....Hutton

PART SECOND.

Part Song—"The Long Day Closes,".....Sullivan
Alto Solo—"Will he come?".....Sullivan
Mrs. Decevee
Part Song—"The Woodland Rose,".....Fischer
Piano solo—(already given)
Glee—"Strike the Lyre,".....Cooke

The great interest of this occasion rested in this first exhibition of the work of the new conductor, Mr. Wm. Tomlins. Under his leadership the society has regained its old prestige, acquired under the baton of Mr. Dohn, and has advanced to a decidedly higher standard of vocal work. In point of finish, fine shading, fire, and above all singing in tune the Apollo society has made a great advance, and exhibited the other night the best male singing ever heard in this city. In artistic value the selections did not exceed those of former occasions, but the quality of the work was far in advance. Mr. Tomlins is a good teacher and has underlined, I am informed, other works of greater æsthetic value for

presentation in future receptions of the club, when they shall have become more confirmed in the good methods of tone-production which he seeks to inculcate. It may be understood therefore that the Apollo club is once more in the musical field under auspices which augur the finest success, since in their new director they have a musician of exceptionally exacting ear, and of the necessary patience and skill to obtain the effects his ear requires.

The Beethoven Society have a concert Dec 9th, the particulars of which I do not yet foresee.

Your Serv't,

DER FREYSCHÜTZ.

NEW YORK, Nov. 22. I have before me a large collection of concert programmes, the accumulation of the past fortnight. Many of them seem to require detailed and extended notice; but if I should attempt to review each one according to its merit I should occupy more space in your columns than falls to my share. My impressions of so many concerts are naturally somewhat confused, and, in order not to omit mention of any, I must make my notes of each one as brief as possible.

First in order of dates, there was a performance of Mendelssohn's *St Paul*, by the Oratorio Society of New York, at Steinway Hall on Tuesday Evening, Nov. 9, with the assistance of Theo. Thomas's orchestra. The soloists were Mrs. Imogene Brown, Miss Anna Drasdil, Mr. Geo. Simpson and Mr. A. E. Stoddard. Mr. Leopold Damrosch conducted the performance.

This Oratorio will bear much more frequent repetition than it gets in New York. With the first bars of the overture we feel the spell of the enchanters' wand; and the influence of the peculiar genius of Mendelssohn is constantly felt throughout the work. What could be finer than the great opening chorus: "Lord thou alone art God," and the subsequent transition from the key of triumph and exaltation to the subdued choral! What more pathetic than the air, for soprano voice, "Jerusalem! Thou that killest the Prophets!" How wonderful the chorus of the Hebrews: "Stone him to death!" But why particularize? I am reminded of a catalogue of paintings in the Antwerp gallery, which I discovered the other day among my books, in which I had endeavored to designate by a pencil-mark such of a certain painter's creations as impressed and pleased me most. When I had finished, all of his paintings were thus indicated.

Now a word as to the performance.

The orchestral part was of course perfectly well done, except upon one occasion when the wind instruments showed some uncertainty, which I think would not have happened if Thomas had held the baton.

Mrs. Brown has a sweet, refined voice and a composure of manner which are very pleasing, but are not all that is required to make a good oratorio singer. She has a way of prolonging a note at the end of a phrase, and makes frequent use of the tremolo in sustaining a tone, a method which, though much in vogue, is not even its own excuse for being.

Miss Drasdil's singing was excellent, and the peculiar quality of her voice was well suited to the selections allotted her. Mr. Simpson was an acceptable substitute for Mr. A. Bischoff, who was announced to sing, but was prevented by illness. Mr. Stoddard, as St. Paul, made a marked impression by the fine sympathetic quality of his voice and his excellent intonation. In the first solo his singing was a little constrained and his voice muffled—probably from nervousness,—and I noticed certain defects in his enunciation, which are about the only faults to be found. In his second solo: "Oh God! have

mercy upon me," his voice rang out clearly and he sang the beautiful Aria with the expression of intense feeling which it requires. His intonation in this and all of his pieces was absolutely correct, nor did he disfigure the text by the addition of superfluous notes or the insertion of turns and trills for the sake of making a display of his voice; a practice by no means uncommon.

The Chorus was good and is steadily improving. The most noticeable defect in their singing, is lack of precision in attacking chords. They seem also to have paid but little attention to pianissimo effects. —Perfection in these things is a plant of slow growth, and we must not expect too much at first.

On Friday afternoon, Nov. 12, Mr. Frederic Boscovitz, one of the best of our resident pianists, gave a matinée Piano-forte Recital, at Steinway Hall, which was well attended. I enclose the programme.

Italian Concerto.....	J. S. Bach	
a. Nocturne, Op. 32, No. 2.	}	Chopin
b. Mazurka, Op. 33, No. 4.		
c. Berceuse, Op. 57.		
d. Valse, Op. 18.	}	J. S. Bach
Ballade, Op. 52.		
a. Bourée, from Partita, B minor.		
b. Gigue, Suite française, No. 4.	}	Grieg
Humoresken, Op. 18.		
a. Tempo di Valse.		
b. Tempo di Minuetto ed energico.	}	Liszt
Rhapsodie Hongroise, No. 12.....		

Mr. Boscovitz will give another recital on the evening of Dec. 1.

On Saturday evening, Nov. 13, Theodore Thomas gave the first of his series of six Symphony concerts, at Steinway Hall. He has now entered upon the ninth season of these concerts, and they are constantly increasing in popularity. Most of the reserved seats are now taken for the season, and the audience is limited only by the capacity of the hall. The programme of the first concert was as follows:

Overture—Iphigenia in Aulis.....	Gluck
Pastorale.....	Bach
Cradle Song.....	Mme. Antoinette Sterling.
Symphony No. 8, in F, Op. 98.....	Beethoven
Der Doppelgänger.....	Schubert
Mme. Antoinette Sterling.	
A Symphony, to Dante's "Divina Comedia,".....	Liszt
For Orchestra and Chorus.	

The entire programme was superbly played. The attempted musical rendering, by Liszt, of Dante's *Divina Comedia* is a work the performance of which has been anticipated with considerable curiosity. The division of the Symphony is the same as that of the poem, making three parts; but, in the symphony, the last two movements are connected without pause. The first treats of Hell; the second of Purgatory; the third of Paradise. The work begins abruptly with a tremendous blast of trombones, seeming to repeat the famous inscription found in the first verse of the third Canto of the Inferno:

"Per me si va nell' eterno dolore,

Per me si va tra la perduta gente;"

followed by the curse of doom:

"Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate,"

which is the principal motive of the movement, given out by the trumpets and horns and returning frequently in varied combinations.

Following this introduction, the strings dash into an *Allegro Frenetico*, which is supposed to represent the hopeless rage of the lost driven around by a hurricane in eternal night. The storm-wind gradually subsiding, an Andante follows which serves to introduce the episode of Paolo and Francesca, and the English horn gives out the doleful phrase:

"Nessun maggior dolore che ricordarsi del tempo felice nella miseria!"

This is followed by an *Andante Amoro*, in 7-4 measure with muted strings, which is suddenly broken by the recurrence of the phrase "Lasciate ogni speranza," this time given to a solo horn. This sudden interruption of a moonlight episode by a lurid flash straight from the gates of Hell, is one of the most effective parts of the work. The move-

ment terminates with a resumption of the *Allegro Frenetico*, the last ten bars enunciating with the full force of the orchestra the dreadful sentence: "Leave hope behind, all ye who enter here."

The introduction to Purgatory is an Andante followed by the principal theme in the form of a choral. This gives place to a second theme in fugal form, magnificently worked up. At the climax of this fugue the choral motive is again introduced. Suddenly an unseen chorus is heard to intone the *Magnificat*, which is taken up by a solo voice to which the chorus responds:

"Magnificat anima mea Dominum." Beginning pianissimo, this theme is worked up to a grand climax and the symphony ends with the triumphant hosannas of redeemed souls.

The impression the symphony gave me was that it is the work of a man whose talent is great beyond comparison, but in whom that indescribable something called genius is lacking.

On the same Saturday evening, the first Philharmonic concert took place at the Academy of Music with the following programme:

Overture to "Julius Caesar,".....	Hans von Bülow
Heroic Symphony.....	Beethoven
Piano Concerto, Op. 15, in D minor.....	Brahms
Transcription, Mendelssohn's Summer-Night's Dream,	Liszt

Both compositions executed by Mrs. Falk-Auerbach.

Herr Wachtel was to sing two selections but owing to his indisposition announced by the Vice-President of the Society, a substitute was found in Mrs. Henry Butman, who sang "Bel Raggio" from "Semiramide."

Inasmuch as I attended the Symphony concert I can give no account of the performance at the Philharmonic. I hear that the house was not well filled, —a result to be expected from the suicidal policy which the society is pursuing.

Herr von Bülow gave his first concert, at the new Chickering Hall, on Monday evening, Nov. 15, before one of the finest audiences that I have ever seen assembled. Not only all our musicians of note, but distinguished members of every profession were to be seen there. The programme was devoted entirely to Beethoven, Dr. Von Bülow making his debut with the Fourth Concerto. He also played the *Sonata Appassionata*, and fifteen Variations, op. 35, in E flat, on a theme which occurs in the *Prometheus* ballet and in the third Symphony. Never before have I heard Beethoven played with such masterly technique and such absolute fidelity to the text and spirit of the composition, as was shown in Hans von Bülow's rendering of the Concerto. Perhaps however it was in the Sonata that he took strongest hold of the audience. There was no lack of enthusiasm on the part of his hearers, and he was recalled again and again to the stage. The orchestra was the best which could be procured here, but more or less faulty, as may be expected when a band of players is so hastily gathered. The new Hall, of which I sent you a full account last week, was admired by all present. Herr von Bülow has given three concerts and one matinée, of which I will write fully in my next letter and also concerning the concert of the New York Quartette last Saturday evening. A.A.C.

Reformed Keyboard for the Piano-Forte.

"F. B." communicates the following description of a new arrangement of the white and black keys on our parlor instrument. Is it a "reform?" We should like to hear how Liszt or Von Bülow would regard it.

To the Editors of the Boston Daily Advertiser:—

A letter lately received from Germany contains matter of sufficiently general interest to warrant my sending you an extract or two. The many friends, too, of the writer, Dr. G—I, as well as those who have read with interest his

essays on a variety of subjects in the North American Review, may be pleased to meet him in a new field.

We are fast becoming so musical that a proposed radical reform (or, at least, change) in our house-hold god, the piano, will appeal to a wide circle of readers; and it must be new to them, for the good reason that one of our first makers has told me that it was new to him. Doubtless the keyboard of the piano was originally made with keys representing the notes only of the diatonic scale, and the necessity of completing the whole chromatic scale caused the addition of the black keys. Now, as between the third and fourth of the diatonic scale, and between the seventh and eighth, there is but the interval of a semitone, the keys answering to those notes could not be separated by a black key. Hence arose the division of the black keys into groups of three and two. But for thus continuing in the original model, there can be no reason to doubt that the keyboard would have been made at first as now proposed,—viz., with alternate white and black keys throughout. But to the extract:—

"Some German piano-makers have lately made instruments with a reformed key-board, which has the advantage of having the distance of the octave shorter by half an inch, and of avoiding the difference of fingering in the different scales or keys. There are but two scales possible on this board, viz: those beginning with a white key and those beginning with a black key. Hence the difficulties of playing would be greatly diminished, and that of transposing a piece would almost disappear, since any piece written in C could at first sight be played in D, E, F sharp, A flat, or B flat. In fact, practically only two keys would exist.

"Yesterday I read an article on this subject in a German paper, which commends, during the transition period, the construction of pianos into which both keyboards, or either of them, can be fitted. The old keyboard, the writer thinks, has no *raison d'être*. It grew out of the C scale. But there is no reason why that scale should enjoy forever a privilege which makes playing in many keys so difficult. The reform is only one of the keyboard. The intervals remain unaltered, and each key will preserve its characteristic sound, which the Sol-fa reformers wish to abolish."

The change will also have an effect on writing for the piano, for, as it has been seen that a piece written in C can be played in five other keys equally well, so a piece written in F can be played from the same notes in all the remaining keys, namely: G, A, B, D flat and E flat. It does not appear how we are to find one place where the keyboard presents such a uniform appearance. But that could be easily effected. A new color might, for instance, be given to a key at certain intervals, say of an octave, or the octave might be distinguished by a mark upon the upright board behind the keys.

Dwight's Journal of Music.

BOSTON, DEC. 11, 1875.

Concerts.

THIRD HARVARD SYMPHONY CONCERT, Thursday, Dec. 2.—Programme:

1. Overture to "The Men of Prometheus," Beethoven
2. *Cantata: "Spring's Greeting," for Chorus with Orchestra.....Gade
3. Symphony in D (No. 2, Breitkopf and Haertel).....Haydn
4. *Twenty-third Psalm: "The Lord is my Shepherd," for female voices. Op. 132.....Schubert
1. Short Marches (second time):
 - a. From "Le Nozze di Figaro,".....Mozart
 - b. "Die Zauberflöte,".....Mozart
 - c. "Fidelio,".....Beethoven
2. "Loreley," Fragments of unfinished Opera (second time).....Mendelssohn
 - a. Ave Maria (female voices).
 - b. Finale for Soprano Solo and Chorus.
3. Overture: "The Hebrides,".....Mendelssohn

This, in contrast to the second, with the great *Eroica* for Symphony, may be called a light programme—light in a good sense; yet altogether classical, choice, pleasing alike to cultivated tastes and simple listeners. Certainly there could not be a greater distance between two Symphonies, both classical in form, than that between this quiet, cheerful, graceful, genial work of Haydn's and that gigantic first full revelation of the deeper soul and genius of Beethoven. It is one of the largest, and noblest of the Haydn Symphonies. If it sounded quite familiar—most of it—it is because Haydn is always Haydn, and the marked melodic motives of all his best instrumental works haunt the air in every musical community; they are heard in arrangements for piano, organ, flutes, church choirs.

So, though to the best of our knowledge it is literally true that this Symphony, as such, for orchestra, has not been heard in Boston for full seven years, yet many a half connoisseur imagined he had been hearing it repeatedly; he had heard things taken from it. The performance by the orchestra gave new evidence of care and improvement; it was truthfully and clearly, and on the whole smoothly rendered,—though those who watch for "roughnesses" doubtless can always find them—while they lose the music; that is a minor matter!

The Overtures went well too, particularly the "Hebrides," which fitly followed after "Loreley," and was indeed beautifully interpreted. The group of little marches, whose happy sequence pleased so much last season, again proved fresh and charming; there is certainly a nice contrast between the naive and simple boys' and girls' wedding march from *Figaro*, the solemn march of Priests from "The Magic Flute," and the Spanish Soldier's quickstep from *Fidelio*; and the succession of keys (C, F, B-flat) happens to come just right.

But the attraction of the Concert was the singing, with and without orchestra, by THE CECILIA, conducted by Mr. LANG, who has again had them in weekly training from the beginning of the season. The voices, now raised to about 120 in number, are fresh and musical, making a fine ensemble. The tones blended richly, beautifully; and all the four parts were effective, though the balance is still capable of improvement. Were they all equal in strength and brilliancy, as well as in sweetness, to the noble body of sopranos, nothing better could be wished. There are some very rich and telling voices among the Contraltos, and the small squad of tenors is musical and sure; but both lacked weight in comparison to the soprano.

The Cantata by Gade is not a work of marked originality, nor of great consequence; but it is fresh, melodious, flowing, Spring-like and buoyant, with a serious middle passage, and has a very charming and ornate accompaniment; the instrumental phrasing and coloring often reminding one of Spohr's *Weike der Töne*, while other passages are in the vein of Mendelssohn. It is easily appreciable, captivating music for the many; it had been faithfully rehearsed and was beautifully sung. But the most exquisite feature of the concert was the Psalm by Schubert, in which the sweet, pure female voices blended in perfect four-part harmony, while the delicate pianoforte accompaniment, so interesting in itself, was nicely played by Mr. SUMNER. The composition is a "gem of purest ray serene;" the effect simply heavenly; and the spell was only too soon broken; doubtless many would have been glad to hear it over again. The very dramatic and romantic "Loreley" music made the same fine impression that it did last year. The choruses of the Finale were sung with spirit and good light and shade, though the orchestral work was not entirely fortunate. Miss WHINNERY began her exacting part a little nervously and tremulously in the low and middle tones; but like a person of true musical feeling, she warmed to the task as she went on, and in the intense dramatic part toward the close, her voice came out clear, true and triumphant in the sustained high notes, so that the climax was indeed effective.—We think it is the general impression that the Cecilia has improved upon itself.

The next [fourth] Concert—owing to fairs at the Music Hall, and Christmas Eve, etc.—will come on an unusual day, namely *Monday*, Dec. 27. The two chief points of interest in the programme will be the E-flat Concerto of Beethoven, played by Mr. LEONHARD; and, for a novelty, the Symphony made by Joachim out of the Grand Duo for piano by Franz Schubert,—a work thoroughly Symphonic in its ideas and its whole laying out in respect of form. Indeed it contains some of the most original and delicate of Schubert's inspirations, developed with a master hand. Joachim [like many others] felt the Symphony in it, when he heard the four-hand piano work played many years ago

by one of our own most respected German musicians with a gifted lad of fifteen bearing the name Hans von Bülow; and he has arranged it for the orchestra with such skill that one can hardly help thinking that Schubert must have so intended it, and only wrote the Duo [Op. 140] as a sketch provisionally. At all events this Joachim-Schubert "Symphony" has kept its place for years in German concert rooms. Two Overtures complete the programme: "In the Highlands," by Gade, for an opening; and for the close, partly as a good specimen of the "light" overtures so often called for, and partly in allusion to the Centennial of Boieldieu, which has been much celebrated [in anticipation] recently in France, his graceful Overture to that Opera which has had more performances than any other opera in Europe, it is said, "*La Dame Blanche*." Boieldieu was born in Rouen, Dec. 16, 1775.

SPEAKING OF SCHUBERT, the 452nd Recital of the of the N. E. Conservatory, on Tuesday last, took the form of a very interesting Lecture on that gifted composer, by Mr. B. D. ALLEN, of Worcester, one of the teachers in the Conservatory, interspersed with performances of several of his works. Mr. Allen briefly sketched the short and uneventful life of Schubert; enumerated his principal works in all forms of composition, great and small, showing an extraordinary productivity for one who lived but thirty-one years; and gave a well-considered, just appreciation of his genius and his distinctive qualities as a composer. Naturally he dwelt with most emphasis upon his rare creative gift as the composer, *par excellence*, of German songs. Out of the exhaustless number of these two specimens were artistically and feelingly sung by Mr. C. R. HAYDEN, one of the best tenors of our concert rooms: these were: "*Sei mir gegrüsst*," and Mignon's song: "*Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt*." Of the piano works were given: the *Divertissement à la Hongroise*, for four hands (Mr. G. W. SUMNER and Mr. ALLEN), consisting of an Andante with a witching melancholy theme, varied at length, a March, and a quaint, piquant Allegretto. We rather wonder that the lecturer, in dwelling with so much just admiration as he did on Schubert's four-hand compositions, did not think to mention the fact that so many of them are Marches by name, and nearly all of them, his Trios, Quartets, etc., too, full of the march rhythm,—a kind of continuous, exulting movement into which his genius seemed peculiarly drawn. (It would have been quite timely too—if only time were not so envious—to have given us a foretaste, in the original four-hand form, of that Joachim-Schubert Symphony to which we have above alluded as the chief feature of the next Symphony concert.) The recital closed with the performance by Mr. Allen of that remarkable Fantaisie-Sonata in G, op. 78, omitting the comparatively uninteresting Finale (Allegretto), but giving the wonderfully broad, full, deeply thoughtful Fantaisie proper, in 12-8 measure (*molto moderato e cantabile*); the enchanting Andante, and the rousing Minuet with its bold, rich harmonies, contrasted with the most delicate of Trios.

THE tenth Concert by Pupils of the COLLEGE OF MUSIC of BOSTON UNIVERSITY, at Bumstead Hall, Nov. 19, was decidedly interesting and full of promise. Three young ladies and three young gentlemen, under the direction of their faithful teacher, Mr. J. C. D. PARKER, performed the following purely classical and exacting programme of pianoforte music. And when we say that each interpretation was of a sound and satisfactory character; that each, as they went on, seemed better than the last; and that, to crown the whole, the Schumann Concerto was actually well and effectively performed, and by a pupil,—we think we have said a good deal, but not too much.

1. Italian Concerto.....Bach
- Allegro moderato—Andante—Presto.
- Miss Plumer.
2. Scherzo in B flat Minor.....Chopin
- Miss Soule.
- a. Prelude in C-sharp Minor.....Bach
- b. Etude in C-sharp Minor.....Chopin
- c. Nocturne in E-flat major.....Schumann
- Mr. Preston.
4. Prelude and Fugue in E-minor.....Mendelssohn
- Mr. Lewis.
- a. Valse, op. 42.....Chopin
- b. Etude in A-flat.....Chopin
- c. Polonaise in A-major....." "
- Miss Pearson.
6. Concerto in A-minor.....Schumann
- Allegro affettuoso—Intermezzo—Allegro vivace.
- Orchestral accompaniment with second Piano.
- Mr. Swan.

BOSTON PHILHARMONIC CLUB.—That was one of the most beautiful and enjoyable concerts of the season, which was given by Mr. BERNHARD LISTEMANN and his associates at Bumstead Hall, on Wednesday afternoon, Dec. 1. But for an entertainment of such decided merit the audience, select indeed, was discouragingly small. The programme was by no means all of equal interest to us, but it contained a large share that was excellent. It was as follows:

Quartet in A major, Op. 90.....Raff.
a. Rasch. b. Rasch (Scherzo). c. Langsam.
d. Rasch.

Second time in Boston.

Messrs. B. & F. Listemann, E. Gramm &
A. Hartdegen.

Piano Solo. Characteristic Pieces, Op. F, Nos. 3 & 4,
Mendelssohn.

Violoncello Solo. Morceau de Concert, E minor,
Servais.

Piano Solo. Scherzo, Op. 31.....Chopin
Madame Madeline Schiller.

Carneval. [Scenes Mignonnes].....Schumann
Preamble—Pierrot—Arléquin—Valse Noble—Eusebi-
us—Coquette—Replique—Lettres dansantes—Chi-
arino—Reconnaisance—Paganini—Va se Alle-
mando—Aveu—Promenade—Pause—Marche
des "David's händler" contre les
Philistines.

[Arranged by B. Listemann.]

Boston Philharmonic Club.

Sextet for two oblig. Horns and String Quartet,
In E flat, Op. 81.....Beethoven

First time in America.

a. Allegro con brio—b. Adagio—c. Rondo allegro.
Messrs. A. Beiz, C. Schumann, B. & F. Listemann,
E. Gramm and A. Hartdegen.

Never have we heard finer quartet playing in this city than these artists gave us in the quartet by Raff, although the composition was not in some portions wholly to our taste; the pathos of the slow movement, for instance, did not seem genuine; the Scherzo was quite brilliant. Mme. SCHILLER was heard with peculiar satisfaction in her fine selections. The two Mendelssohn pieces, which we do not remember to have met before, proved highly interesting; the first, a Fugue, of strong, marked character, in which she brought out each voice with perfect clearness, one would have hardly imagined to be by Mendelssohn; the second had his individuality most unmistakably, a piece full of fire and poetry; a swift and eager flight of fancy, very difficult, and played to a charm. Mme. Schiller's rendering of the well known Chopin Scherzo, too, was eminently successful and placed it in a somewhat new light. Mr. HARTDEGEN brings out rich, expressive tones through the whole compass of his violoncello; and he showed great mastery both of the *cantabile* and of *bravura* execution in a composition of a rather shallow kind. Mr. Listemann's arrangement of Schumann's charming little piano pieces (for quintet of strings with flute) was very clever, bringing out the character of several them more pointedly than the piano could do it; while for some others, such as the *Coquette*, the strings seemed too heavy. They were all very nicely played.

The chief feature and novelty of the concert, however, was the Beethoven Sextet, with the two horns. It was marked "first time in America," and we presume rightly; for though an arrangement of it may have been given, with violas in place of horns, still it is just these horns which constitute the distinctive charm of the composition. In itself the music is, for Beethoven, a little tame and commonplace, though altogether musical and graceful; it sounds certainly like one of his early works, say of about the period of the Septet, although it appears in the catalogues as Op. 81 b, Op. 81 a being the Sonata: "Les Adieux" etc. With the horns, so admirably played as they were, all three of the movements were heard through with delight. The horn parts are very difficult, particularly the first horn; but Mr. BEIZ is a consummate master of his instrument, and he was very ably seconded by Mr. SCHUMANN of our Boston orchestra.—We trust the next Matinée of this excellent series will draw the audience which it deserves. Certainly on this occasion Bumstead Hall, made beautiful with light and color, proved comfortable as well as excellent for sound.

We have yet to speak of a very interesting third Concert given by Mr. PERABO with his friend VON INTEN; of the admirable Glee and Madrigal singing by the New York vocalists; a Thomas concert, etc.

Music in Paris.

Nov. 9. I enclose two programmes of Padeloup's Concerts at which I have had the pleasure of assist-

ing, supposing that they might not be altogether uninteresting.

Oct. 31.

Overture de Don Juan.....Mozart.
Symphonie pastorale.....Beethoven.
Reverie.....Schumann.
Entre'acte.....Taubert.
Concerto pour violon.....Max Bruch.
Allegro moderato, adagio, finale.
Exécuté par M. Maubin.

Le Songe d'une Nuit d'été.....Mendelssohn.
Nov. 7.

Symphonie en ut majeur.....Beethoven.
Allegro agitato from "Lobengrin".....Mendelssohn.
4e Concerto pour piano (Op. 70).....Rubinstein.
Allegro moderato—Andante—Finale.
Exécuté par M. Diemer.

Fragments du quintette (Op. 108).....Mozart.
Larghetto—Menuet—Allegretto con variazioni.
Exécutés par M. Grizez (clarinette) et tous les in-
struments à cordes.
Overture de Oberon.....Weber.

I have little doubt but that you have been in the *Cirque d'hiver* where these things are given; but if not, I may remark that as 1. is where a circus with its elephants nightly perform, the smell of the usual accompaniments of the ring is nearly as loud as the accompaniments of the solo pieces.—The building is moreover so skilfully adapted to the destruction of the audience in case of fire, that having upon a careful examination, estimated the number of hearers at 2750, I convinced myself that if a panic should occur, from fire or other cause, 2749 of those present would lose their lives, by actual cremation or suffocation.

I will tell you briefly what were the salient points of these performances as they struck me.

1st. The Orchestra was most perfectly balanced. The proportion of strings being very large. 10 contrabassi and 10 celli. Five on each side, put at the rear. The Timbales in the rear centre. Trombones in rear. In front of these, were 4 horns and 4 fagotti. Next came 2 clarinets, 2 oboes, piccolo and 2 flutes. All the rest were strings.

The Pastoral Symphony was played slower than we take it in Boston, and in a more subdued manner. In fact, the orchestra showed constant signs of strict discipline and much practice. I observed the same peculiarity at the Grand Opera, where the orchestra, although very large, was so well balanced and under such perfect control, that it overpowered neither the singers nor the hearers. No pestilential trumpet prided himself on his lungs! This orchestra also took most of the music of *Favorita* and *Faust* much more slowly than we are accustomed to, and with good effect.

Beethoven's Symphony No. 1, in C, was on the contrary played faster than with us, and the brilliancy, accuracy and rapidity of the Finale was beyond description.

The "Pomme d'Amour" by Taubert, played by the strings alone, *pizzicato*, is a very taking piece, not tricky.

I must add a word about the behavior of the audiences. They are unpunctual in arriving, and the concerts always begin with the entrances choked with late comers. During the performances, the hearers listen attentively and appreciatively, but there their virtues cease, for at the end they conduct themselves more rudely than do ours, and by the time the final piece is ended nearly half the people have left. At the theatres this same practice prevails. It quite reconciles one to our Boston people, some of whom seem to have suddenly recollected something which calls them out.

The Von Buelow Concerts in New York.

Herr VON BUELOW has given six concerts and two matinees, in New York, besides three soirées and one matinée of Chamber music. I send the programmes in regular order.

[As the seven programmes of the larger concerts are composed almost entirely of the same materials with those of Von Buelow's concerts in Boston—the only additions (on his own part) being the third Concerto, in G, by Rubinstein; three smaller pieces ditto; and Liszt's Fantasia on "The Ruins of Athens"—we omit them to save room.—ED.]

The programmes of the musical soirées were as follows:

I. Monday Evening, Nov. 29.

1. W. A. Mozart—1756-1791.
Quartet in G minor for Piano, Violin, Viola, Violoncello.

[Allegro—Andante—Rondo.]

Messrs. Dr. Damrosch, Matzka, Bergner and Hans von Buelow.

2. W. A. Mozart.

Aria—"Non paventer."

M. as Thursday.

3. Piano Solo.

[a] J. S. Bach—1685-1750.

Fantasia chromatique et Fugue.

[b] G. Haendel—1734-1759.

Suite in D minor. (Prelude and Fugue—Allemand—Courante—Aria con variazioni—Capriccio.)

4. G. Haendel.
Aria—Si l'amor o Cara (Muzio Scaevola.)

M. as Thursday.

5. L. V. Beethoven—1770-1828.

Grand Trio for Piano, Violin, Violoncello, Opus 70,
No. 2, in E flat.

Messrs. Dr. Damrosch, Mr. Bergner, Hans von Buelow.

II. Wednesday, Dec. 1.

1. Second trio, for piano and strings, Op. 112.Raff

Messrs. von Buelow, Damrosch, and Bergner.

2. Song—"La Separazione".....Rossini

M. as Lizzie Cronyn.

3. Fantasiabilder, "Faehingsschwank in Wien,"

Schumann

Dr. von Buelow.

4. Songs, [a] "O sanctissima Virgine".....Gordigiani

[b] "Thou'rt like unto a flower,".....Rubinstein

M. as Lizzie Cronyn.

5. Quartet for piano and strings in E flat, Op. 38,

Rheinberger

III.

1. Louis Spohr—1784-1859—Third Trio,
For Piano, Violin and Violoncello. Opus 124,
in A minor.

Allegro moderato. Andante con variazioni.

Scherzo. Finale.

Messrs. Dr. Damrosch, Bergner and Hans von Buelow.

2. G. F. Haendel—1684-1759.

"Ye Verdant Hills," Air from "Susanna,"

Mr. A. E. Stoddard.

3. Johannes Brahms—1833.

XXV Variations and Fugue on an Air of Haendel's

Opus 24.

4. [a] F. Liszt—1811—"Thou'rt like unto a flower,"

[b] R. Schumann—"Dedication." [Widmung]

Mr. A. E. Stoddard.

5. Robert Schumann—1810-1856.

Quintet for Piano and Strings. Opus 44 in E flat.

These concerts were all given at Chickering Hall, and

were well patronized, although, during the last week when

the concerts gave place to the musical soirées without an

orchestra, there was a noticeable falling off in the attend-

ance.

Herr von Buelow's appearance has been attended with

the usual amount of newspaper puffing and indiscriminate

praise, all of which is doubtless merited were it only con-

fined to those qualities which make his playing admirable.

Much however has been said and written in admiration of

qualities which are not to be found at all in his perform-

ance.

The first impression which his playing makes is that of

prodigious power. This is shown, not by any exhibition

of brute force, in pounding the piano, for, though his fin-

gers are like hooks of steel, nothing could be more deli-

cate than his treatment of the instrument; but by a certain

air of *sang froid* indicating an immense reserve force, and

by an accuracy of detail which is absolutely—sometimes

merely—faithful to the composition which he is per-

forming. This impression is made stronger by what we

know of his marvellous memory. He has at his finger

ends nearly every composition for the piano that is worth

knowing. Many of the pieces in his repertory are long

and complicated concertos, of which he has stored within

his brain, not only the part he is to perform, but every note

of the orchestral music in connection with it. In this re-

spect, Herr von Buelow is certainly without a peer.

Every talent and accomplishment that go to make the

perfect pianist are his. In this what a summing up of

salient points, any one of which would be conspicuous

merits in one of the common run of professional pianists!

What force of will! What indomitable energy! What pa-

tience must have been brought into play to achieve such a

result, and how little would even these things have availed

without a natural gift of talents such as are seldom vouch-

safed to anyone. But admiration does not stop here.

Herr von Buelow is more than a perfected pianist. He

possesses that peculiar refinement of talent which makes

the consummate artist. I can illustrate this distinction no

better than by citing his performance of the Concerto in

C minor by Raff, when, apparently not being in first rate

condition, he made not fewer than seven or eight distinct

slips by either striking the wrong note or two notes where

one should be struck (which simply proves that Jove some-

times nods). Here the pianism was at fault, but a more

thoroughly artistic rendering of the piece could hardly

have been given; every part of the composition was justly

weighed and balanced, the shading was of the most deli-

cate, the coloring of the most vivid that can be imagined.

And the whole performance without a flaw, save that be-

fore mentioned, which is not of any great significance.

But that which is most of all to be admired in Herr von

Buelow's playing is a faculty by which he makes his hear-

er forget both pianist and artist. With the modesty of a

true devotee of art he places the tone picture before you in

the most favorable light and himself aside in the shadow.

You wonder at the picture; approval of the light in which

it is shown is an afterthought. When Beethoven is played

you hear Beethoven, not Von Buelow. And so on through

the long list of classical and modern music. It is just this

objectivity that makes the perfection of art, and it goes

further than any other intellectual trait to make the artist.

I have merely touched upon certain salient points of

Herr von Buelow's playing, but have doubtless failed to

enumerate many of his merits; let them be summed by

conceding every talent that can be acquired, and he will

not be rated too high.

But there are some things that cannot be acquired.

Is his playing emotional? Are we moved by it? Do we

shed tears? Is it ice and fire? Not in the least.

This then is the little rift within the lute.

The playing of Von Bülow, as compared with that of Rubinstein has been a subject of discussion. It is a contrast rather than a comparison; for players more utterly unlike could scarcely be found. The one is always accurate and always to be depended upon. The other was remarkably uneven in his performance and went to heights and depths which are undreamed of in the philosophy of Von Bülow.

Von Bülow's style I have characterized as objective,—his hand is subdued to what it works in. The style of Rubinstein is intensely subjective; he colors everything with his own individuality.

I have heard Rubinstein play when he struck false notes, omitted whole bars of the music and blurred the phrase, almost distorting it beyond recognition; and yet at the same time there was something in his playing which redeemed it from being bad. That something was his own genius. A performance with the same defects, by a player of talent merely, would have been wholly bad.

And I have heard Rubinstein at other times by force of that same genius play so divinely as to be above the reach of praise. He awakened emotions. Von Bülow simply compels admiration.

This is the vital point of difference between the player of genius and the player of talent.

In closing this fragmentary article let me say with regard to the orchestra that it was the best that could be made up from the materials at hand and included a number of excellent players, yet it was far from perfect and at times it must have hampered the pianist. There was however a perceptible improvement in the performance of the orchestra from night to night under the baton of Dr. Damrosch, who proved himself an able and painstaking conductor.

A.A.C.

Music in Milan.

There are at the present moment resident within the *rayon* of a mile round the Piazza della Scala, as many *prime donne* in *posse* as would suffice to glut the continental and insular temples of the lyric drama with Rosinas, Lucias, Gretchens, Valentines, Leonoras, and Aminas, for the next twenty years, leaving a handsome surplus for the benefit of Egypt and the United States. They are, for the most part, in the chrysalis state; humbly lodged in third and fourth stories of the huge, rambling Milanese houses—the slaves of antiquated *maestri*, whose rival "methods" supply them with an inexhaustible subject of wrangling conversation—spending their mornings in the torments of *solfeggio*, and their afternoons in struggling with the difficulties of the Italian language. It is a dismal and a monotonous life that these ambitious young ladies, more than a hundred of whom are American and British subjects, lead in the Lombard capital. Why, one cannot help asking one's self, do they select Milan for the seat of their studies? Its climate is variable, and by no means favorable to the organs by which the voice is produced. Bitter cold winds often blow there for weeks at a stretch—winds that remind one of the notorious "Viento del Norte," which has conferred so unenviable a reputation upon Madrid. At other times, the city is held for days in a spell of dampness, during the prevalence of which tenor and soprano throats become relaxed, and the prospective *prime donne* *assolute* sing as flat as though they were so many Mallingers. The traditions of executive excellence that still hang round the Scala, can be but of little practical benefit to live students; and the realities perpetrated in that theatre are of so painful a character, that, at best, they can but serve as warnings—not as examples.

Let us turn from the Scala, and from the example and instruction afforded by that institution, to the musical students, aspirants to the highest honors of the operatic stage, temporarily resident in Milan, to the *maestri* upon whom these latter are virtually dependent for the instruction which is, or, at least, so they believe, to enable them at some future time to reap crops of diamonds and gather in golden harvests. The two principal teachers of dramatic singing who enjoy almost exclusively the monopoly of tuition in this branch of the musical art are, oddly enough, both octogenarians. One of them is an uneducated peasant, afflicted with deafness and a desperately bad temper. He has never taken the trouble to learn the Italian language, and conveys reproof, advice, and exhortation to his pupils in the Milanese dialect, which but few of them understand, and which is as unmusical a jargon as Platt-Deutsch. He vehemently deprecates intelligence and an inquiring spirit in his *élèves*, and refuses to have anything to do with them unless they will render him a blind and unreasoning obedience. "Non voglio

teste sbagliate; bisogna ubbidirmi come un cane!" is a favorite axiom of this agreeable old gentleman. He has invented a system, too, of producing the voice which is one of the most remarkable discoveries of this or any other age. It is called the "Diaphragmatic Method."

This theory is that the voice has not its source in the lungs—"nous avons changé tout cela," this modern Diafoirus would certainly observe, could he only speak French—but in, or under, the largest muscle in the human body. You must, according to him, draw up your voice from somewhere behind your midriff, and utter your note *after* expelling your breath from the lungs, not in the act of so doing, as would occur to the vast majority of human beings unversed in the "Diaphragmatic Method." He also promulgates the surprising doctrine that you should breathe into your bones to prepare yourself for the emission of a musical note. This part of his system is a mystery, the key to which I have hitherto failed to discover, though I have bestowed great pains upon seeking for it. Would-be singers are not, to the best of my belief, specially provided with bones connected with their breathing apparatus, like swallows or pigeons. Were this so, the problem of aerial navigation might be solved with more than lightning swiftness, and Signor Lambert's pupils, by inflating the osseous framework of their bodies as a preparatory measure to the uttering of dulcet sounds, might find themselves in a position to perform a much more remarkable feat than the production of *la or sol* can ever be considered, whether those tones be evoked from the diaphragm or pumped up from the bones. Some excellent musical friends of mine here have the audacity to assert that this system is mere mischievous nonsense, the absurdity of which could be exposed in five minutes by any anatomical lecturer; but the *maestro* sticks to it, and finds it profitable. He nails his diaphragm to the mast, so to speak, and under that muscular banner obtains as many pupils as he can teach, whom he brow-beats into the belief that they are inflating their bones when they really are only oxygenating their blood. Another singularly encouraging characteristic of this amiable theorist, in his quality as a teacher of singing, is his practice, whenever a new voice is submitted to his judgment, of declaring that the voice in question must first be utterly destroyed by his diaphragmatic method, and then built up again—I presume, upon a bony foundation. So far as the destructive part of this view of his is concerned, he has indeed been triumphantly successful in the case of two or three particularly fine voices belonging to young English and American ladies, which "the method" has annihilated. I only hope he may be enabled to fulfil the remainder of his undertaking, and reconstruct them. I am informed that the *maestro*, who has probably entered into some exceptional arrangement with the Parca with a view to the conversion of Mr. Thom to centenarian principles, intends to transfer his class from Milan to London, where he proposes to make a snug little fortune in a few years, returning subsequently to Italy to spend it with his young wife. He is a strange being, and would, of a verity, be an interesting addition, preserved in spirits, to a Museum of Comparative Physiology.

The other great *maestro*, a "*jeune homme foldâtre*" of eighty-one, is a gentleman by birth and education, who pooh-poohs the famous Diaphragmatic Method, and stoutly maintains that all the singers he ever taught drew their breath from their lungs, not from their bones. He is a kindly and encouraging, though strict teacher; but he labors under the trifling disadvantage of being a confirmed paralytic, which *does* a little interfere with the business of instruction. He gives his lessons in bed, and is visited by short spasms, at irregular intervals, which at first prove highly disconcerting to his female pupils. Thus, of the two great Milanese *maestri* who prepare young artists for their *début* on the stage of the lyric drama, one is deaf and the other smitten by paralysis; one is short-tempered and too often rude, the other is invariably *de bonne humeur*, and polite to a fault. The one has a "method," the benefits of which can only be acquired at the expiration of a two year's course, as it takes the most assiduous pupil twenty-four months to learn how to breathe through her bones and evolve musical sounds from the pit of her stomach; the other is content with imparting the methods of better men than himself, *à la super antiquas vias*, teaches, as it were, *au jour le jour*, and does as much for his pupils as his incurable malady will let him. Such are the two mighty singing-masters of Milan, the great-grandfathers of song, under whose rival banners are ranged some scores of "coming celebrities."—*Home Journal*.

Special Notices.

DESCRIPTIVE LIST OF THE LATEST MUSIC, Published by Oliver Ditson & Co.

Vocal, with Piano Accompaniment.

Old Kristopher Kringle. Song and Cho. 20
2. G to d. Vener.

"Oh, the merry jingle,
Of our Christmas bells to-night!"
A simple and sweet Christmas "carollet."

Serenade. (Standchen). He who Heaven and Earth is keeping. 3. Ab to f. Raff. 30

"Till from heav'nly portals shining."
"Bis auf goldner Himmelsleiter."
A most charming serenade.

Souvenir de Swampscot Album. Cirilli, ea 50
No. 1. Sailor Boy's Mother. (La Madre del Marinaro). 4. A minor to f.

"Da Lungbi, ecco un naviglio."
"See, yonder, white sails appearing."
Better than the average of Italian-English songs; since the music has the sweet grace of Italian composition, and the words have character, pathos and sense. For Alto (Mezzo-Soprano) voice.

Shall I write to say I love thee? Song and Cho. 2. Bb to f. Brooks. 35

"Tell me darest, sweetest,—do!"
A simple and pretty song, sung by Bryant's Minstrels.

Parting. 4. F to f. Eayra. 40
"Then my soul shall cease its longing,
And forever be at rest."

Properly sung, should be an effective concert song.
Ends in key of Bb.

Pull down the Blind. 3. C to e. McCarty. 30
"Did you ever make love?
If not, have a try."

Very neat and pretty comic song.

Margaret at the Spinning Wheel. (Gretchen am Spinnrade). 4. D minor to a. Schubert. 40

"My heart is sad, my rest is o'er."
"Mein Ruh' ist hin, mein Herz ist schwer."
It must be Faust's Margaret that is meant, and the beautiful, mournful music is quite equal to express the rich, sad sentiment of the words.

Instrumental.

VON BÜLOW.

1. Gavotte. From Gluck's Don Juan. 4. A. 40
2. Chaconne. In F. Handel. 60
3. Polonaise Characteristique. Moniuszko. 60
4. Gavotte. Gotthard. 50
5. March Heroique. Op. 3. Von Bülow. 60
6. Bach's Fantasia. In C minor. 35
7. Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata. Op. 27, No. 2. 1.00

Fortunately for us, the great pianist is disposed to be a grand interpreter of classical music, and these published pieces are admirable studies, as well as admirable music.

Merry Christmas. Morceau de Salon. 4. F. G. D. Wilson. 60

Merry as the Christmas bells, and will be a nice musical gift. Fine picture title.

Funeral March for Henry Wilson. With Portrait. 2. G minor. Bursh. 40

Those who purchase it will have a good portrait of the deceased Vice-President, in addition to the impressive music of the march.

BOOKS.

Boylston Club Collection. Glees and Choruses for Male Voices. \$1.50

These pieces are well selected, and will be welcomed by Male Quartets everywhere.

Living Waters. D. F. Hodges. 30

A collection of the best kind of sacred pieces for Praise Meetings, Prayer Meetings, Camp Meetings, etc. Above half the music is newly composed for this work, and the other half is selected from the valuable copyrights of Ditson & Co.

Concone's Lessons and Exercises for (Bass) voice. Op. 9. 2 books, each \$2.50

There are 50 lessons in these two volumes. The value of Concone's materials cannot be doubted.

ABBREVIATIONS.—Degrees of difficulty are marked 1 to 7. The key is marked with a capital letter: as C, B flat, &c. A small Roman letter marks the highest note, if on the staff, an *italic* letter the highest note, if above the staff.

